

Casey Building
173-177 North Wells Street;
 northeast corner of North Wells
 Street and West Couch Place (an alley)
Chicago,
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1038

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
41-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington Planning and Service Center
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ILL-1038

CASEY BUILDING

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Location: 173-177 North Wells Street; northeast corner of North Wells Street and West Couch Place (an alley); Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: Cosmopolitan National Bank; occupant is Anderson, Riley, & Sava Furniture Company.

Present Use: Furniture showrooms and offices.

Statement of Significance: Built in 1888, the structure was one of the last works of John M. Van Osdel, the first architect to practice in Chicago. The multi-story, brick building is distinguished for its simple, monumental facade composed of large windows which are separated by molded brick piers that rise to a series of arches. It is an unusually fine example of the use of brick as a decorative element in the architecture of the 1880's.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lots 3, 4, 5, and 6 of Block 33 of Subdivision of lot 5 of Subdivision of lot 4, Block 33, Original Town of Chicago. Recorded September 22, 1848.

The following was taken from the chain of title contained in Book 454B, pp. 100-101, in Cook County Recorder's Office:

The property was obtained by Patrick Casey from Edward Taylor (lots 5 & 6) and Edward Casey and wife (lots 3 & 4) on December 12, 1881 and April 21, 1882, respectively (Documents 363852 and 389323). The land was apparently held by various members of the Casey family for a number of years; on January 28, 1898 James J. and Edward P. Casey in an unnamed court case concerning the property (Document 180543). James J. Casey's inventory, dated January 31, 1912 included the parcel of land (Document 125/264). The last mention of the Casey family was recorded November 15, 1933, when Edward P. Casey sold the property to Oliver Root (Document 11315779). Since that time the property has belonged to a number of miscellaneous parties: Jackson Realty, Berkshire Life Insurance Company, 171-177 North Wells Street, and Chicago Title and Trust Company. The latter transferred the title to the present owner (lots 3 & 4), the Cosmopolitan National Bank,

on June 6, 1961 (Document 18178359).

2. Date of erection: 1888.
3. Architect: John M. Van Osdel, Sr. (1811-1892).

(Note: For information and bibliography on the Van Osdel firm, see HABS photo-data [HABS No. ILL-1028] on the Occidental Building - 107-111 North Wacker Drive, at West Washington Street, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois - which was executed by Van Osdel's nephew of the same name. John M. Van Osdel, II, became a partner in 1871, and carried on the firm after his uncle's death.

4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: See Supplementary Material.
5. Original plan and construction:

The original Building permit #2739, dated August 16, 1888, recorded in Book E, September 17, 1885 - September 30, 1888, p. 276, in the Department of Buildings, Chicago, states the following: P. Cassey [sic], 6-story warehouse, 67' front, 70' deep, 81' high, 5th Ave. [Wells Street] 41/45, \$38.00 amount paid for permit.

See also HABS form on the Casey Building, Chicago, for a description of the structural system.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Aside from its notable architect, there is no known information on the Casey Building and family that would relate it in any importance to the early history of Chicago.

C. Bibliography:

Randall, Frank A. History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949. p. 116.

Van Osdel, John M. 1811-1900, Architect's Account Books. Chicago: 1856-1900. 3 Vols. Gunther collection in the Library of the Chicago Historical Society. Vol. 3, p. 15.

D. Supplementary Material:

Van Osdel, John M. 1811-1900, Architect's Account Books. Chicago: 1856-1900. 3 Vols. Gunther collection in the Library of the Chicago Historical Society. Vol. 3, p. 15.

1888	P. Casey	6-story building	5th Ave. near Lake St.
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Kind of work	Contractor	Amount	Payments on Account (this section omitted in transcription)
Masonry	A. Lanquist	6350	
	Centerwall	1000	
Cutstone	John Rawle	531	
Plastering	Roberts and Jones	165	
Carpentry	Dietz & Co.	4644	
Pris/m lights	Brown Bros. Mf Co.	215	
Painting	H. J. Milligan	375	
Glass	Kimball	995	
Iron Work	Holmes Pyott & Co.	1470	
Copper	T. Allen	77	
Plumbing	J. Garvey	525	
Elevators	Eaton & Prince	625	
Gas Engine	Otto Co.	1655	

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka
Historian
National Park Service
J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
September, 1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is one of the last works of the first Chicago architect, John Van Osdel. It is a large, multi-story brick structure, distinguished for its simple, monumental facade. Its large windows are separated by molded brick piers that rise to a series of arches.

2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Approximately 66'-0" x 138'-0"; six stories; six bays on west front.
2. Layout-shape: Rectangular.
3. Wall construction: Deep red brick; brick piers with rounded corners separate the windows. Corbelled string courses at the sills of fourth and sixth floors.
4. Structural system, framing: Masonry bearing walls on the north and south, and in the middle of the building (running east and west). A wooden beam runs east and west in each of the two bays defined by the bearing walls. The beams are supported by round wooden columns. A sign on the fourth floor indicates that the allowable load is 89 lbs. per square foot in the north-half of the building, and 83 lbs. per square foot in the south-half of the building. A similar sign on the third floor indicates that the allowable floor load is 79 lbs. per square foot.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Entrance door on west front, 2 service doors on the east.
 - b. Windows: Large show windows on first floor. Double-hung windows on floors above. The upper sash on the fifth story are arched to complement the brick arcade.
6. Roof:
 - a. Covering: Flat, built-up.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Shallow copper cornice at roof. Simple stone brackets below.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:
 - a. Basement; Storage.
 - b. First and second floors: Sales floors.
 - c. Floors three through five: Storage.
 - d. Sixth floor: Workshop.

2. Stairways: One stairway in the center of the building on the south side of the middle bearing wall. One on the north wall between third and fifth floors only has floor openings closed at each level.
3. Flooring: Wooden.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Unfinished brick walls on third through sixth floors. Exposed wood-constructed ceiling on third through sixth floors. Painted plaster walls on remodeled first and second floors.
5. Lighting: Electrical.
6. Heating: Central heating on first and second floors. Unit heaters on floors three through six.

D. Site:

General setting and orientation: The building faces west on Wells Street between Lake and Randolph Streets, on the west side of Chicago's "Loop." The elevated system is located on Wells Street immediately to the west of the building.

Prepared by J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
August, 1964